DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 502 SP 038 893

AUTHOR Taylor, Pamela A.
TITLE Multicultural Education Issues: Perceived Levels of Knowledge of Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators.
PUB DATE 1999-11-18
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Point Clear, AL, November 17-19, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Awareness; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Knowledge Base for Teaching; *Knowledge Level; *Multicultural Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Preservice Teachers; *Student Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Educators
IDENTIFIERS *Teacher Knowledge

ABSTRACT

This study assessed preservice teachers' and teacher educators' knowledge regarding issues related to multicultural education. Participants were 78 preservice teachers who completed the Multicultural Knowledge Test during the first class period of a Social Foundations of Education course. There were also 45 teacher educators at the same university who completed the test. Researchers collected data on demographics, major and class rank (for preservice teachers), and education and professional experience (for teacher educators). Data analysis involved statistically comparing results on the Multicultural Knowledge Test to the average knowledge level score. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between preservice teachers' and teacher educators' multicultural knowledge levels. The knowledge levels of preservice teachers were significantly below average. The knowledge levels of teacher educators were almost average. This indicates that both teacher educators and preservice teachers need to increase their multicultural knowledge levels. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 436 502

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION ISSUES: PERCEIVED LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS

Display Session

by

Pamela A. Taylor

University of Southern Indiana

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the

Mid-South Educational Research Association

November 18, 1999

Clear Point, Alabama

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. A. Taylor

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Do not duplicate this manuscript without permission of the author.

8600 University Boulevard
Evansville, IN 47712
812-464-1818 (office)
ptaylor@usi.edu (e-mail)

SP038893

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Introduction

American "immigration has shifted from being 85% European American to 85% Latin-American and Asian, with a rapidly increasing contingent from the Middle East" (p. 3). Resultantly, the United States is the "first world nation in the history of humanity" (Hodgkinson, 1997, p. 3), where every nation in the world has a resident in this country. Roberts (1993) observed "during the past decade, the Asian population grew by 108%, the Hispanic by 53%, the black by 13%, and the white by only 6%" (p. 75). In 1990, every state in the United States had a higher percentage of students of color than in 1980 – every state increased in racial and ethnic diversity (Hodgkinson & Outtz, 1992). With the arrival of a new immigrant population comes a corresponding group of immigrant children, and schools are the recipients of these immigrant children. Additionally, these children will be from backgrounds in which English is a second language and will bring a host of different languages to their classrooms. Summarily, as a result of immigration, the United States is becoming less white, both in and out of the classroom.

By the year 2000, Gollnick and Chinn (1998) predict, "one-third of the nation will be African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American. These groups will comprise 40% of the population by 2020, and 50% of the population by 2050" (p. 82). Asian Americans "come from more than 20 countries, speak more than two dozen languages, and practice a variety of religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity" ("In Our Own Words," 1996, p. 50). Gollnick and Chinn (1998) forecasted that

> at the end of the twentieth century, African Americans will be the largest non-European groups, but by 2030 nearly one-fourth of the school-age children will be Latino. Although racial and ethnic diversity has long existed in school, the next fifty years will be characterized by either greater conflict among groups, especially the declining white majority, or the sharing of education resources and power. (p. 82)

The population of the United States is rapidly becoming more diverse with majority populations increasing in numbers and concomitantly the majority populations decreasing. Thereby, the near future is promising a more diverse student population.

As the demographics of the United States continue to change, these changes create what Banks (1991) refers to as the "demographic imperative," a situation which requires classroom teachers to be more responsive to an increasingly diverse population. At the same time, teacher educators are reminded by Larke (1990) that, "Educating teachers to be culturally sensitive is a challenge facing teacher education programs. Historically, teacher education programs have educated preservice teachers to work effectively with one socioeconomic group (middle class) and one culture, the dominant culture" (p. 23). The demand for education equity for all students require an awareness that different cultures may require different teaching practices. However, the need for different teaching strategies or practices cannot be accommodated when teachers are not aware of or sensitive to what those needs are.

Need for Cultural Literacy

An awareness and acceptance of the diversities of culture demand that teachers are culturally literate. Cultural literacy means being conversant with the basic ideas, issues, personalities, and events that reflect perspectives and experiences other than those of the dominant culture. With this literacy comes cultural competence, whereby teachers can argue for the changes in the curriculum that will enable students to challenge the mainstream, challenge the societal inequities, and help all students to develop accurate self-knowledge within a humane national culture (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Ladson-Billings (1994) identified five areas that play a large role in educating a multiculturally diverse population: "teachers' beliefs about students, curriculum content and materials, instructional approaches, educational settings, and teacher education" (p. 22). She further reported that multicultural education research teaches us that prospective teachers with positive attitudes and beliefs are more prone to be culturally responsive and sensitive in actual teaching situations involving students of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, backgrounds, abilities, economic levels, etc., and generally in dealing with multicultural issues in the classroom. These findings are supported by Larke (1990) who contends that studies show ". . . a high correlation exists among educators' sensitivity (attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors

toward students of other cultures) knowledge and application of cultural awareness information and minority students' successful academic performance" (p. 24).

It has been suggested by Gollnick (1990) that it is only when teachers are culturally sensitive are students able to develop their full potential for academic, social, and vocational success. Locke (1988) proposed that teachers need to develop certain levels of cross-cultural awareness to be effective in teaching culturally different students. According to Locke, a major element of cultural awareness that enhances teaching effectiveness involves teachers developing understanding of the personal contexts that undergird teacher thinking and interactions with students from culturally different backgrounds.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to assess the levels of knowledge, of preservice teachers and teacher educators, regarding issues related to multicultural education. The following research questions were the focus of this study:

1. Do preservice teachers and teacher educators score at or above average for their knowledge about issues related to multicultural education as measured by the Multicultural Knowledge Test (Aguilar, 1995)?
2. Are there statistically significant differences between the scores for preservice teachers' and teacher educators' knowledge about multicultural education issues as measured by the Multicultural Knowledge Test?

For this study, a preservice teacher is one who is enrolled in a teacher education program. On the other hand, teacher educators are the faculty, for a program of study in a college of education, which prepares future teachers.

Methods and Procedures

The subjects for this study consisted of 78 preservice teacher education students enrolled in three sections of a Social Foundations of Education course, offered at a mid-sized southern university. These subjects represented a sample of convenience as they were intact classes when surveyed. The subjects

completed the Multicultural Knowledge test during their first regularly scheduled class period. As a result, there was a 100% response rate. On the other hand, 86 teacher educators were identified as having either taught a course or supervised a field experience required for every preservice teacher, at the above-mentioned university. After an initial mailing and one follow-up reminder, 45 teacher educators volunteered for this study.

Data was collected using the Multicultural Knowledge Test, which is a 35-item, seven-point Likert-type response format measure of topics and issues central to general multicultural education knowledge. The instrument response format ranged from 1 (*none*) to 7 (*extensive*) to measure knowledge of topics and issues central to general multicultural education. The responses to the Multicultural Knowledge Test were statistically compared to the average knowledge level score of 4.00, the median test value.

Demographic Data

Table 1 presents demographic information regarding the age, gender, race, and religion of subjects. The majority of preservice teachers were of traditional age, under 25 years old (56%), female (62%), and White (79.5%). The majority of teacher educators, on the other hand, were over 41 years old (68.8%), practically even by gender with 53.3% female and 46.7% male, and also predominately white (80%). Preservice teachers were almost evenly split between elementary (46.2%) and secondary education (46.2%) for majors, with the majority (64.1%) being seniors (see Table 2). Table 3 shows that 75.6% of the teacher educators hold doctorate degrees and the highest percentage have over 20 years teaching experience (44.4%). While at the same time, the greatest majority of teacher educators' tenure, teaching at the university, ranged from one to ten years.

Table 1. Demographic Frequency and Percentage of Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators

	Preservice Teachers [1]		Teacher Educators [2]	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Age				
< 25	56	73.8	0	0.0
25 - 30	12	16.4	3	6.7
31 - 35	7	9.0	5	11.1
36 - 40	2	2.6	6	13.3
41 - 49	1	1.3	20	44.4
50 +	0	0.0	11	24.4
Gender				
Female	62	79.5	24	53.3
Male	16	20.5	21	46.7
Race				
Black	15	19.2	7	15.6
White	62	79.5	36	80.0
Mixed/Bi-racial	1	1.3	1	2.2
Asian			1	2.2

Note: [1] N = 78. [2] N = 45.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Preservice Teachers' Majors and Class Rank

	Frequency [1]	Percent [2]
Major		
Elementary Education	36	46.2
Secondary Education	36	46.2
Special Education	5	6.4
None specified	1	1.3
Class Rank		
Senior	50	64.1
Junior	17	21.8
Sophomore	6	7.7
Freshman	3	3.8
None specified	2	2.6

Note: [1] N = 78. [2] Total = 100%.

Table 3. **Frequency and Percentage for Teacher Educators' Education and Professional Experience**

	Frequency [1]	Percent [2]
Highest Degree Earned		
Doctorate	34	75.6
Masters	11	24.4
Years Teaching		
1 - 3	4	8.9
4 - 5	1	2.2
6 - 10	6	13.3
11 - 20	14	31.1
> 20	20	44.4
Years Teaching at university		
< one year	4	8.9
1 - 3	11	24.4
4 - 5	12	26.7
6 - 10	10	22.2
11 - 20	5	11.1
> 20	3	6.7

Note: [1] N = 45. [2] Total = 100%.

Data Analysis

Do preservice teachers and teacher educators score at or above average for their knowledge about issues related to multicultural education as measured by the Multicultural Knowledge test? The scores for the test are given in Tables 4 and 5. The data for this question was analyzed with a one-sample *t*-test, with a test value of 4.00, an average knowledge level. The scores that tested with statistical significance above 4.00 indicated above average knowledge levels, while a score showing a statistical significance below 4.00 indicated below average knowledge levels. Preservice teachers' multicultural knowledge mean score ($\underline{M}$ = 3.08) was significantly below average (see Table 4). Teacher educators' score, although below the test value of 4.00, indicated no statistically significant difference from the test value (see Table 5) thereby, their mean score ($\underline{M}$ = 3.93) was average.

Table 4. Multicultural Education Knowledge Level of Preservice Teachers

	M	SD	SE	t-value	df	2-tail Prob.
Level of Multicultural Knowledge	3.08	.93	0.11	- 8.75	77	.000*

Note. * $p < .05$. N = 78.

Table 5. Multicultural Education Knowledge Level of Teacher Educators

	M	SD	SE	t-value	df	2-tail Prob.
Level of Multicultural Knowledge	3.93	1.06	.16	- .51	44	.613

Note. * $p < .05$. N = 45.

Are there statistically significant differences between preservice teachers and teacher educators knowledge about multicultural education issues as measured by the Multicultural Knowledge Test? A comparison of the mean scores is indicated in Table 6. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of preservice teachers' and teacher educators' multicultural knowledge levels. The overall comparison revealed that teacher educators had significantly higher mean score than preservice teachers, $t(121) = 4.62$, SE = .19, $p = .000$. Thence, there is a statistically significant difference between preservice teachers' and teacher educators' knowledge about multicultural education issues.

Table 6. Comparison of Preservice Teachers' and Teacher Educators' Mean Scores for the Multicultural Knowledge Test

	Preservice Teachers [1]		Teacher Educators [2]			
	M	SD	M	SD	t-value	2-tail Prob
Multicultural Knowledge Level	3.08	.93	3.92	1.07	4.62	.000*

Note. [1] N = 78. [2] N = 45, df = 121.
* Average knowledge level (4.00), $p < .05$.

Conclusions and Discussions

The multicultural knowledge level of preservice teachers (M = 3.08) is significantly below average. This finding supports the recommendations for teachers to become multiculturally literate (Gay, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Goodwin, 1997). The multicultural knowledge level of teacher educators (M = 3.93) although practically average, indicates a need for teacher educators to also increase their knowledge levels. Because, as we are reminded by Melnick and Zeichner (1995) "there is an old adage—teachers teach what they know—and so do teacher educators. The correlate is that we can't teach what we don't know." (p. 14) In keeping with the affirmations of Garcia and Pugh (1992) that, despite unequivocal mandates of NCATE, the majority of teacher education faculty see cultural pluralism, and consequently multicultural education as a minority or civil rights issue and they (faculty) feel unqualified to deal with the issues, and thus avoid them. This avoidance defies the determination of Zeichner, Melnick, and Gomez (1996) that

> in order for teachers to be able to implement the principle of cultural inclusion in their classrooms, they need general sociocultural knowledge about child and adolescent development, about second language acquisition, and about the ways that socioeconomic circumstances, language, and culture shape school performance and educational achievement. They must also have specific knowledge about the languages, cultures, and circumstances of the particular students in

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

their classrooms. . . . teachers must be able to utilize this knowledge in the organization of the curriculum and instruction to stimulate student learning. (p. 143)

A comparison of these scores revealed a statistically significant difference between the scores, $t(121) = 4.62$, $SE = .19$, $p = .000$. It would stand to reason that teacher educators would score significantly higher than preservice teachers, by the sheer nature of their advanced education and life experiences. Even though, the differences between teacher educators' and preservice teachers' scores for their multicultural knowledge were significant, the narrowness of the differences make them unimpressive. More importantly, the low scores for teacher educators confirm the premise of Grant (1998) that there is little hope that teacher-candidates are being trained by persons who are themselves highly sensitive to and knowledgeable about diversity issues as they refer to life in the classroom. This premise is substantiated by the findings of Grant (1998) that concluded that more than 95% of teacher educators have had no substantive teaching experience in urban schools. It is thereby reasonable to assume, given this data, that the current educational professorate has had little or no training in multicultural education.

To conclude, there is a call for preservice teacher education programs and teacher educators to make multicultural education a curricular priority by assessing the needs of prospective teachers and fulfilling those needs at all costs. Trent (1990) called for the inclusion of "scholarship on race and ethnicity as a core part of the preparation of the nation's teachers" (p. 360) and provides three reasons:

1. The student body is becoming more diverse.
2. The economic future of the nation depends on meeting the educational needs of this diverse population.
3. The teaching force is becoming more female and more white.

A recommendation of Miranda and Scott (1994) is for colleges and universities

> to adopt a core of multicultural education requirements that will provide future teachers with both general and specific multicultural education knowledge, extending from broad coverage of multicultural education issues to classes and experiences that will build knowledge about specific cultural/racial groups in a variety of content areas. (p. 51)

In order for the tenets and goals of multicultural education to be realized in teacher education programs, the role of teacher educators will have to be more narrowly defined. The consensus in the literature is that it is the duty of teacher educators to practice what they preach. Further, researchers who have explored teacher development in the area of multicultural education agree that movement toward a multicultural perspective begins with individual knowledge and awareness (Gay, 1977; Sleeter, 1992). If teacher educators are to be effective at advocating the goals and tenets of multicultural education they must be held to the same standard they hold for preservice teachers.

References

Aguilar, T. A. (1995). Multicultural Knowledge Test. (Available from the Center for Curriculum and Instruction, The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68588-0355).

Banks, J. (1991). Teaching multicultural literacy to teachers. Teacher Education, 4(1), 135-144.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1996). What matter most: A competent teacher for every child. Phi Delta Kappan, 193-200.

DuCette, J. P., Sewell, T. E., Shapiro, J. P. (1996). Diversity in education: Problems and possibilities. In F. B. Murray (Ed.), The teacher educator's handbook: Building a knowledge base for the preparation of teachers (p. 136-155). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Garcia, J., & Pugh, S. L. (1992). Multicultural education in teacher preparation programs: A political or an educational concept? Phi Delta Kappan, 74, 214-219.

Gay, G. (1977). Changing conceptions of multicultural education. Educational Perspectives, 16(4), 4-9.

Gollnick, D. M. (1990). Multicultural education in a pluralistic society. Columbus: Merrill Publishing Company.

Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (1998). Multicultural education in a pluralistic society. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Goodwin, A. L. (1997). Historical and contemporary perspectives on multicultural teacher education: Past lessons, new directions. In J. E. King, E. R. Hollins, & W. C. Hayman (Eds.), Preparing teachers for cultural diversity (pp. 5-22). New York: Teachers College Press.

Grant, C. A. (1998). The multicultural preparation of U.S. teachers: Some hard truths. In G. K. Verma (Ed.), Inequality and teacher education: An international perspective (pp. 177-194). Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Hodgkinson, H. L. (1997). Diversity comes in all sizes and shapes. School Business Affairs, 3-7.

Hodgkinson, H. L., & Outtz, J. (1992). The nation and the state: A profile and data book of America's diversity. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership/Center for Demographic Policy.

In our own words: Asian American students give voice to the challenges of living in two cultures. (1996). Teaching Tolerance, 5(2), 48-59.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1992). The multicultural mission: Unity and diversity. Social Education, 56(5), 308-311.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). What we can learn from multicultural education research. Educational Leadership, 1(8), 22-26.

Larke, P. J. (1990). Cultural diversity awareness inventory: Assessing the sensitivity of preservice teachers. Action in Teacher Education, 12(3), 5-31.

Locke, D. C. (1988). Teaching culturally-different students: Growing pine trees or bonsai trees? Contemporary Education, 59(3), 130-133.

Melnick, S. L., & Zeichner, K. M. (1995). Teacher education for cultural diversity: Enhancing the capacity of teacher education institutions to address diversity issues. (Research Report 95-4). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.

Miranda, A. H., & Scott, J. (1994). Preparing classroom teachers for the future: The development, implementation, and follow-up of a multicultural education course. Journal of Staff Development, 15(3), 50-53.

Roberts, S. (1993). Who are we? New York: Time Books.

Sleeter, C. E. (1992). Keepers of the American dream. London: Falmer Press.

Trent, W. (1990). Race and ethnicity in the teacher education curriculum. Teacher College Record, 91(3), 361-369.

Zeichner, K. M., Melnick, S. L., & Gomez, M. L. (1996). Currents of reform in preservice teacher education. New York: Teachers College Press.